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MICRONESIA

STATINTL

## STAGING AREA IMPERIALISM

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"I want every wave in the Pacific to be an American wave," former Secretary of State Dean Rusk was once quoted as saying. Rusk might well have had Micronesia in mind. Spread out over an expanse of the western Pacific larger in area than the continental United States, this group of tiny islands has, in the last 100 years, been occupied by a succession of colonial powers—Spain, Germany and later Japan; after World War II another expanding empire, the United States, stepped into the void left by the defeated Japanese. All but oblivious to the existence of Micronesia, many Americans will recognize the names of specific islands within the group. World War II veterans remember Saipan, Kwajalein and Peleliu; for the nuclear generation, Bikini and Eniwetok come immediately to mind. And Americans who have never heard of the geographical entity to which these specks in the Pacific belong should go back to their school maps, for the Nixon Administration is turning the area into a military arsenal and training center for its Project AGILE Pacific Defense System.

Micronesia became an American "protectorate" in 1947, under a unique arrangement of the United Nations Trusteeship Council which invested the United States with full responsibility for the islands' economic, social and political development, full authority over their internal affairs, and permission to build military installations, conduct nuclear explosions, and generally use them as a buffer against powers in the Far East which long ago ceased to be hostile. Technically, the arrangement was provisional, it being assumed that eventually the Micronesians would be "ready for self-government." Their murky political status as a U.S. "trust" was underlined when Washington, anxious to avoid a colonial blemish, handed the job of administering the territory over to the Department of the Interior—which, for its part, followed a policy of "benign neglect" reminiscent of the behavior of its Bureau of Indian Affairs. Before 1964, the trusteeship proceeded on a shoestring budget that never exceeded \$7 million, half of which went to pay the salaries of Interior Department personnel. The Defense Department's Micronesia budget for nuclear tests alone exceeded the combined State Department and Interior Department budgets by more than \$1 million; not surprisingly, the DOD wound up making most of the important administrative decisions—including the forced evacuation of residents in the Marshall Islands group to make way for a series of thermonuclear explosions which nonetheless exposed the islanders to thousands of radiation and con-

taminated most of their food supply. "Social and economic development" remained almost moribund as the territorial administration, fearful of "outside influences" that might undermine U.S. control, enforced a near-total quarantine on foreign trade. At least one Micronesian died and many others were disabled by live bombs which the United States never bothered to remove after World War II.

By 1964 this blatant mismanagement succeeded in provoking a Trusteeship Council investigation, the upshot of which was a resolve by the investigators to come back again in three years to determine what changes, if any, had been made. The prospect that the United States might be stripped of its trusteeship if conditions on the islands did not significantly improve could not be taken lightly, particularly because of secondary effects stemming from recent escalation of the war in Vietnam. The Japanese leftists had responded to that development by stepping up their attacks on the Japanese-American Mutual Security Pact, which in 1960 had been extended for ten years. Fearing that the pact might not survive beyond 1970, United States policy makers were even more apprehensive lest sizable U.S. investments inside Japan be threatened by rising political instability there. To appease the Japanese, Washington began giving serious consideration to the idea of abandoning its base on Okinawa, itself the scene of growing anti-American demonstrations. What was needed was a site of comparable strategic value to which the Okinawa operation could be transferred. Thailand and South Korea were too close to enemy territory; the political situation in the Philippines was already too volatile. Micronesia was another story. Not only was it out of reach of Chinese and Soviet medium-range missiles; but if the United States could maintain the kind of control over the islands' internal affairs that it had once enjoyed, the political results of operating a military outpost there could be held to a minimum.

The impending U.N. investigation posed an immediate and irritating stumbling block to these designs. President Johnson and his advisers were well aware of the need to engage in some housecleaning in Micronesia before the investigators arrived; at the same time, they knew that if the Micronesian people could be prevailed upon to enter into a voluntary association with the United States, all U.N. authority in the matter would end. In 1966, without waiting for the customary invitation from the host nation, Mr. Johnson dispatched a contingent of Peace Corps volunteers to the islands, hoping simultaneously to mollify the U.N. and to persuade the natives that a permanent "free association" with the United States really was in their best interests. Most of the volunteers promptly busied themselves with land management, teaching (usually English or American history) and "community development."

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# KEY VIETNAM TEL THE KENNEDY YE

Following are texts of key documents accompanying the Pentagon's study of the Vietnam war, dealing with the Administration of President John F. Kennedy up to the events that brought the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963. Except where excerpting is specified, the documents are printed verbatim, with only unmistakable typographical errors corrected.

## U.S. Ambassador's '60 Analysis Of Threats to Saigon Regime

Cablegram from Elbridge Durbrow, United States Ambassador in Saigon, to Secretary of State Christian A. Herter, Sept. 16, 1960.

As indicated our 495 and 533 Diem regime confronted by two separate but related dangers. Danger from demonstrations or coup attempt in Saigon could occur earlier; likely to be predominantly non-Communist in origin but Communists can be expected to endeavor infiltrate and exploit any such attempt. Even more serious danger is gradual Viet Cong extension of control over countryside which, if current Communist progress continues, would mean loss free Viet-nam to Communists. These two dangers are related because Communist successes in rural areas embolden them to extend their activities to Saigon and because non-Communist temptation to engage in demonstrations or coup is partly motivated by sincere desire prevent Communist take-over in Viet-nam.

Essentially [word illegible] sets of measures required to meet these two dangers. For Saigon danger essentially political and psychological measures required. For countryside danger security measures as well as political, psychological and economic measures needed. However both sets measures should be carried out simultaneously and to some extent individual steps will be aimed at both dangers.

Security recommendations have been made in our 539 and other messages, including formation internal security council, centralized intelligence, etc. This message therefore deals with our political and economic recommendations. I realize some measures I am recommending are drastic and would be most [word illegible] for an ambassador to make under normal circumstances. But conditions here are by no means

normal. Diem government is in quite serious danger. Therefore, in my opinion prompt and even drastic action is called for. I am well aware that Diem has in past demonstrated astute judgment and has survived other serious crises. Possibly his judgment will prove superior to ours this time, but I believe nevertheless we have no alternative but to give him our best judgment of what we believe is required to preserve his government. While Diem obviously resented my frank talks earlier this year and will probably resent even more suggestions outlined below, he has apparently acted on some of our earlier suggestions and might act on at least some of the following:

1. I would propose have frank and friendly talk with Diem and explain our serious concern about present situation and his political position. I would tell him that, while matters I am raising deal primarily with internal affairs, I would like to talk to him frankly and try to be as helpful as I can be giving him the considered judgment of myself and some of his friends in Washington on appropriate measures to assist him in present serious situation. (Believe it best not indicate talking under instructions.) I would particularly stress desirability of actions to broaden and increase his [word illegible] support prior to 1961 presidential elections required by constitution before end April. I would propose following actions to President:

2. Psychological shock effect is required to take initiative from Communist propagandists as well as non-Communist oppositionists and convince population government taking effective measures to deal with present situation, of hand. To achieve that effect following suggested:

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4. Permit National Assembly wider legislative initiative and area of genuine debate and bestow on it authority to conduct, with appropriate publicity, public investigations of any department of government with right to question any official except President himself. This step would require that the purpose: (A) find some mechanism for dis-

*Peleliu Invasion Beach*

# The Americanization of Micronesia: Paradise Lost

**H**ILARY BEST WAS SIMPLY beside herself as she strolled across the stage, her blond bangs shimmering in the spotlights of the annual Miss Universe contest. Staring into the red eye of the TV camera, she burred: "Why here I am, Miss Guam. Just think, we've always lived in New Jersey—I never even heard of Guam until two years ago. And now, all of this just because my daddy's in the Navy."

Miss Best is only one small example of the United States' arrogant gifts to Micronesia. Americans have also brought disease, Dairy Queens, and one of the most vital military staging areas in all of Southeast Asia to these haunting islands.

Micronesia, located 3000 miles west of Hawaii in the rolling expanse of the western Pacific, gives the U.S. a unique but little-publicized foothold in Asia. Sprinkled across three million square miles of ocean, the 2000 tiny islands have formed the United States Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. Nominally, the U.S. administers the islands as a Trust for the United Nations, not as a U.S. possession. But each of Micronesia's 100,000 inhabitants knows that the quality of his life depends less on his desires or those of the U.S. than on the whims of American civilian and mil-

itary personnel. For 20 years following World War II, the U.S. first abused and later neglected the Micronesian people, leaving Micronesia as a military retreat where GIs might sample firsthand the sensual pleasures Gauguin discovered a century ago. Then suddenly in the late 1960s events in Vietnam and the Pacific rekindled America's interest in the islands for their strategic potential. A spate of "explanatory" visits began to whip up popular enthusiasm for the military's schemes. Simultaneously the Micronesians and their political leaders resolved to end their subservience to the U.S. and to preserve the remnants of their culture from inundation by the West. Today Micronesians find themselves and their islands arrayed as pawns on an oceanic chessboard as the U.S. prepares to expand her Pacific influence.

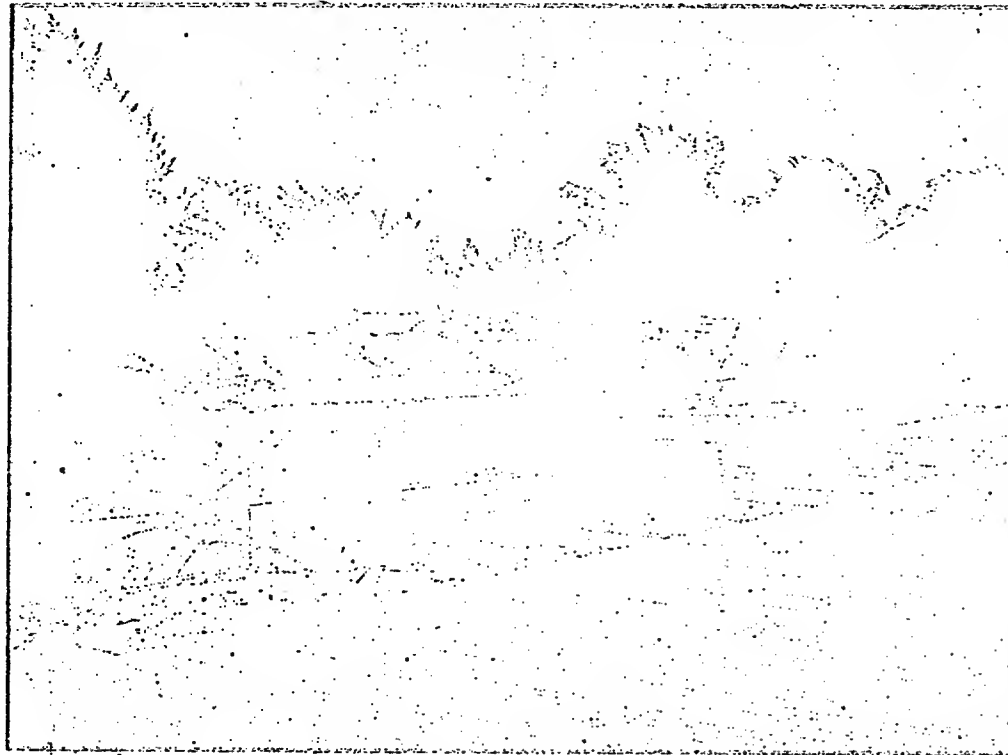
## [DEALING IN A PACIFIC COLONY]

**M**ICRONESIA'S KALEIDOSCOPIC colonial history began in the 1880s when Spain solidified her hold on the three great island chains of the Marianas, Carolines and Marshalls and their disparate peoples. After the War of 1898, America seized Guam and incorporated it as a full U.S. territory, and Germany

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# Colonizing Paradise

by Jerry Fite



One morning in early May, 1969, the Department of Interior's Land Management Officer for the Mariana Islands called me in my office on Saipan.

"Jerry," he said, "I wonder if you'd do me a favor."

"Sure, if I can."

"The Distad [District Administrator] asked me to arrange a briefing on

*Jerry Fite was a Peace Corps staff member in Micronesia from 1966 to 1969.*

Micronesian customs for some visitors. I thought you'd be good to talk about how the local customs affect Americans. You know, some of the do's and don'ts."

"Who's the briefing for?"

"I'm not free to say."

"Where will it be?"

"I can't tell you that either."

"When will it be?"

"It isn't definite yet. Probably tomorrow or the next day. I'll call

you a half hour before the meeting and pick you up."

After agreeing to the arrangement, I shuffled through my "hold" box and pulled out a letter dated a few days earlier. The letter contained the response from the Department of Defense to Congressman Lloyd Meeds concerning DOD activity in Micronesia. "The Department has no imminent plans for Micronesia," the letter said.

The day after his phone call, the Land Management Officer came by my office and picked me up in his jeep. With him were the Sheriff of Saipan and the Saipan Superintendent of Elementary Schools, both Micronesians. The Land Management Officer refused to answer any of our questions as we drove to the abandoned Easley Field, now an immense overgrowth cut occasionally by a haphazard maze of old roadways and a con-

crete airstrip. After five minutes of winding through the maze all of us except the driver were completely disoriented. We seemed to be going in circles. Each new turn looked just like the last. After one turn we almost collided with another jeep. It was camouflaged, and an Air Force Major in a camouflaged uniform sat at the wheel, a two-way radio in his hand. The Land Management Officer stopped our jeep, got out, and had a whispered conference with the Major. The Major spoke into the radio. "We're coming in," I heard him say. "There are four of them."

We followed the Major's jeep further into the underbrush. Three or four minutes later we emerged into a small clearing. There was an Air Force base--rows of camouflaged tents in neat order, some more jeeps, water trucks, and assorted military equipment, including a pickup truck full of garbage. The Major led us into an old Japanese communications building. About three dozen Air Force men were seated inside in a large room.

The Major introduced the Land Management Officer, who introduced me and the two Saipanese. Then the Major explained that the men had to have some relaxation, and he was thinking about letting them go into the village. Since he knew there was resentment and suspicion about the military on Saipan, he wanted us to brief the men on how to behave in the most inoffensive manner. The Sheriff was to explain the local laws, the Superintendent to explain customs and taboos from the Micronesian point of view and I from the American point of view.

All three of us began with a statement something like: "A good way to avoid initial suspicion and distrust is to not hide in the underbrush on Easley Field." Then we talked about problems the men might encounter in bars, dating local girls, and so forth. The men were polite, but were bothered that people might not receive them well. All they wanted was a beer or two and a little nooky. They